DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 406 721 EA 027 988

AUTHOR Vivigal, Lisa
TITLE Meals Served in Public Schools.
INSTITUTION Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Breakfast Programs; *Child Health; *Dietetics; Elementary Secondary Education; Food Standards; *Lunch Programs; *Nutrition; Private Schools; *Public Schools

ABSTRACT

The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) contacted public school districts around the United States to determine if they offered low-fat, healthful meals. The PCRM ranked the schools according to whether they served low-fat and vegetarian meals daily, whether these meals varied through the week, and whether children needed to specially request them. Schools offering a variety of low-fat entrees throughout the week ranked higher than schools with salad as the only low-fat entree for each school day. This report lists the 20 school districts or communities by overall ranking, followed by descriptions of the menus offered by school districts at the top and bottom of the list. The top three public school districts included Dade County (Florida); New York City Public Schools; and the Houston (Texas) Independent School Districts. Two independent public schools also rated highly--Hamilton Middle School (Seattle, Washington) and Peabody Charter School (Santa Barbara, California). The lowest ranked districts included District of Columbia Public Schools, Los Angeles (California) Unified Schools, and Chicago (Illinois) Public Schools. Two private that offered low-fat options are also recognized: St. Albans School in Washington, D.C., and Rye Country Day School in Rye, New York. Finally, two private schools--St. Mary's High School in Monroe, Michigan, and Providence St. Mel High School in Chicago, Illinois--are noted for their affiliation with McDonald's restaurants. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: EA
In our judgment, this document is also of interest to the Clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view. CS

PCRM PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE
5100 WISCONSIN AVENUE, NW • SUITE 404
WASHINGTON, DC 20016
(202) 686-2210 FAX: (202) 686-2216

ED 406 721

Meals Served in Public Schools

PCRM contacted public school districts around the country to determine if they offered low-fat, healthful meals. We ranked the schools according to whether they served low-fat and vegetarian meals daily, whether these meals varied through the week, and whether children needed to specially request them. Schools offering a variety of low-fat entrees throughout the week ranked higher than schools with salad as the only low-fat entree for each school day. Here are the overall rankings, followed by a close-up view of the cream of the crop and the bottom of the barrel. In the latter category, some schools have relinquished their food services to--believe it or not--McDonald's.

Overall Ranking

1. Dade County (Florida)
2. New York City
3. Houston
4. Atlanta
5. Charlotte (North Carolina)
6. St. Louis
7. Dallas
8. Seattle
9. Pittsburgh
10. Boston
11. Philadelphia
12. Owego Apalachin Central Schools (N.Y.)
13. Denver
14. Montgomery County (Maryland)
15. Austin (Texas)
16. San Francisco
17. Cleveland
18. Washington, D.C.
19. Los Angeles
20. Chicago

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L. Vidigal
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

EA027988

Top of the Class

Dade County Public School District, which serves Miami, Florida, gets top marks for offering low-fat vegetable side salads or fruit plates daily as well as a vegetarian lunch entree daily, which is occasionally low-fat such as a bean burrito. In addition, most of the schools

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

and all of the high schools have a daily salad bar, and all the cafeterias also serve a daily hot vegetable prepared without added fat. Students can get additional portions of the side vegetable and fruit items. Because of the county's diverse ethnic population, entrees offered vary from school to school. For breakfast, the schools serve toast and jelly, fruit and/or fruit juice, and cereal daily.

New York City Public Schools have daily salad bars in all secondary schools, including beans, fruits, low-fat dressing, and other rotating items such as cucumber, tomato, and beet salad with vinaigrette dressing. The secondary schools occasionally offer baked potatoes. At the elementary level, students can take extra helpings of daily side vegetables and fruits prepared without fat such as a garden salad, corn on the cob, and fresh fruit. The elementary schools would accommodate special requests for other foods, but items offered are at each school's discretion. For breakfast, New York schools serve juice or fruit and cereal daily.

The **Houston Independent School District** offers a low-fat salad and fresh and/or canned fruit for lunch daily. In addition, lunch offers a fresh or hot vegetable daily, usually prepared without added fat. Houston schools occasionally offer other low-fat side items, including seasoned pinto beans, refried beans, and rice. For breakfast, Houston offers juice and cereal, and once weekly, juice and a breakfast burger which students can request without the high-fat, high-cholesterol contents (butter, cheese, egg, and meat).

Several individual public schools especially stand out. **Hamilton Middle School**, a public school in Seattle, Washington, shines for offering hot, low-fat entrees daily to students. For every lunch, Hamilton serves a vegetarian entree prepared with little or no added oil, such as a bean and rice burrito, stir-fried vegetables with rice or pasta, or a bean patty. In addition, lunch always offers fresh fruit, salads, bagel sandwiches with alfalfa sprouts, tomatoes, and cucumbers, and fresh, crunchy vegetables such as radishes, carrots, broccoli, zucchini, and cauliflower. Hot side vegetables are also prepared without added fat. For breakfast, Hamilton offers toast, jelly (as well as peanut and almond butters), cereal, juice, and fresh fruit daily. **Peabody Charter School**, a public elementary school in Santa Barbara, California, also stands out for providing a salad bar, fruits, and fruit juice at every lunch. Several times during each month, Peabody also offers hot, low-fat vegetarian entrees such as spaghetti, a baked potato bar including vegetarian chili (made with no added oil), green onions, broccoli, and soy "bacon" bits, and a build-your-own-fajita/burrito bar including beans, rice, and assorted vegetables. Peabody often prepares hot vegetables with no added fat or stir-fries them in a small amount of oil (students could request vegetables without any oil). The most popular lunch item, pizza, is available weekly, and the cafeteria would try to accommodate any request for low-fat, cheese-free pizza. For breakfast, juice is available daily and other items rotate. Because Peabody does not always serve a low-fat, vegetarian breakfast item, the school would accommodate requests for daily low-fat items, probably by offering cereal or a bagel.

Detention Hall Dining

District of Columbia Public Schools fall near the bottom of the class for providing no daily low-fat meals for its elementary children. Elementary school children are left with artery-clogging foods like hash browns, sausage, or oven-fried chicken. Sadly, some District of Columbia schools add butter to hot vegetables and will not allow students to get their side vegetables without it. District elementary schools make just one concession--students who prefer meatless lunches can have extra helpings of fruits and vegetables and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches by special request. On the bright side, the District offers low-fat breakfasts and lunches at its secondary schools, serving cereal, fruit or juice, and occasionally toast for breakfast and salad bars daily for lunch.

Los Angeles Unified School District trails behind the District of Columbia because it will not provide daily low-fat or vegetarian lunches at any level. Los Angeles will not even grant requests for them unless the student presents a physician's letter certifying a special need for accommodation because of physical or mental impairments. Los Angeles does serve some meals which it could *choose* to easily convert to low-fat, tasty meals but, sadly, will not. For example, for the bean and cheese burrito with raw vegetables and Ranch dip, the schools could leave out the cheese and substitute fat-free Italian dressing for the Ranch dip and the kids would have a delicious, healthful meal without fat and cholesterol. At the secondary level, students can have extra portions of fruits and vegetables, but vegetables may have added fat. At all levels, some low-fat items may be available a la carte, such as bagels, but offerings vary throughout the schools.

At least Los Angeles gives the students a low-fat start to their day--the schools serve cereal and fruit juice or fruit daily for breakfast at all school levels.

Chicago Public Schools rank rock-bottom of school districts surveyed. Chicago does not provide daily low-fat or vegetarian breakfasts or lunches and will not make any accommodations to ensure students have daily low-fat school meals. Children are stuck with fatty, high-cholesterol meals such as scrambled eggs, bacon, and corn dogs.

For lunch, students are permitted to take extra helpings of fruits and vegetables, but the vegetables are not always low-fat or vegetarian. Some healthful vegetarian a la carte items may occasionally be available, including black beans and rice, baked potatoes, or greens, but the selection varies from school to school and the school system would not provide a la carte menus. At the high school level, salads are usually available daily, but not guaranteed.

Private Schools

We also sampled a number of private schools, some of which stand out with various low-fat, vegetarian foods available daily to students. **St. Albans School**, a private boys school in Washington, D.C., serves a low-fat, vegetarian lunch entree, such as spaghetti with marinara

sauce or baked bean burritos (no added fat) for lunch each day. St. Albans also offers various breads, a salad bar, and fresh fruit daily.

Rye Country Day School, a co-ed school in Rye, New York, offers a salad bar or salad daily (no-fat dressings and vinegar available), as well as whole grain bread, fresh fruit, fruit juices, rice cakes, and juice-packed canned fruit. Home-made vegetarian soups such as lentil, minestrone, or rice and bean soup are available at least once each week, and pasta with tomato sauce is offered about once weekly. Vegetarian burgers and baked potatoes are occasionally offered and fried foods are rarely served. Breakfast offers fresh fruit, hot oatmeal, bagels, cereal, and jam.

Taking Corporal Punishment to a New Level

Not all private schools provide a variety of low-fat foods to their students. St. Mary's High School in Monroe, Michigan, uses McDonald's as its food service provider, and Providence St. Mel High School in Chicago, Illinois, has a McDonald's restaurant in the school with outside street access for public customers.